

SPEECH

OF

HON. C. L. DUNHAM, OF INDIANA,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, APRIL 6, 1852,

ON THE HOMESTEAD BILL.

The House being in the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union (Mr. HIBBARD in the chair) on the Homestead Bill—

Mr. DUNHAM said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: In attempting to address the committee upon this occasion, I shall be guilty of a violation of what is at least the usual practice here; for I propose to discuss, mainly, during the hour allotted to me, the bill legitimately under our consideration. I think it one of the most important measures that has been before this House or the country for many years.

I know, that in certain quarters, this proposition to grant lands to actual settlers is regarded as but of small moment; by some, as being a question of revenue merely, and they suppose that, owing to the flourishing condition of the finances of the country at this time, it makes but little difference whether we should dispose of the proceeds of the public lands, as they have heretofore been disposed of, as part of the revenues of the country, or whether we should change our whole system of their disposition in accordance with some scheme of the kind which is now before the committee. But I look at this matter in a much broader and more comprehensive view. It is not the mere disposition of two or three millions of the annual revenues of the country. No, sir; any man who looks back and traces the history of this Union, and examines the causes of our growth, prosperity, and greatness, must come to the conclusion that the public lands, and the manner in which they have been disposed of, form one of the most important.

Sir, I think there is nothing except the Constitution and institutions of the country, that has contributed more to that growth, to that prosperity, and to that national greatness, than these public lands. The people of the older States have spread themselves over this vast territory, and have built up not only villages, towns, and cities, but many great and growing States; and it is this, more than anything else undoubtedly, which has attracted the gaze and excited the astonishment of the nations of the Old World. Why, sir, as they have watched

our onward progress, they have seen State after State rise up in the advancing West, as "Alps o'er Alps" tower upward to greet the admiring gaze of the approaching traveler.

As our national vessels have, year after year, visited their seas, they have seen almost each successive year add another star to the bright galaxy upon our national flag. It is this rapid extension of our country, this rapid growth of our power, this rapid increase of our wealth, and of the comfort and happiness of the immense number of our population, which undoubtedly, more than anything else, has attracted their attention and excited their astonishment. It is an important question, then, not only in a financial point of view, but it is important in its moral, its physical, and its political consequences to our own country and to the world.

There are others who regard this measure as a trifling one, because they consider it a mere demagogical movement on the part of some individuals who are courting political popularity and power. They do not believe that there is any settled policy either in this House or in the country, to bring about such a change in the disposition of the public land, as this bill proposes. Let me say to all such, that they are very much mistaken. The people of this country, when their attention is aroused to a subject, pursue it with avidity; and if the principles upon which that subject is advocated, are sound, and commend themselves to their reason and judgment, they continue to pursue it until the object is accomplished; and it strikes me that this is one of that character of measures, and that sound policy, sound judgment, sound reason, will at least sustain a modification of our present mode of disposing of our public lands. If this be so, you may rest assured that the energy of character and intelligence of the people—especially of the Western States—and their constant disposition to investigate, will lead them to pursue this subject, now that it has attracted their attention, until some result will be brought about from that investigation. I tell gentlemen from the older States, that it is perfectly useless for them to

undertake to resist the onward progress of this reformation. They will not, they cannot succeed. Why not, then, act the part of wise and prudent statesmen, and, like the boatman in his little bark, who, when the tide sets too strongly against him, instead of endeavoring to stem, puts his craft before the current, keeps it upon the right track, and guides it to a safe and proper haven? This would surely be a much more prudent course than to undertake to turn back the tide of public opinion, and defeat measures which have taken a deep hold of the popular mind and the popular judgment; for the one you may do, the other you cannot.

Now, sir, there will undoubtedly be a change in the mode of disposing of the public lands of this country; and, for that change, gentlemen who represent, and who have heretofore represented the old States, may thank themselves; for it is the legitimate result of their own course. Year after year, propositions have been brought forward in this House, and at the other end of the Capitol, to graduate and reduce the price of these public lands, so that those which were comparatively worthless, should not either remain unsold in the midst of densely-populated districts, or be sold for the same price as the choicest lands in the country. But, gentlemen from the older States have set their faces against these propositions, and the result is, that you have kept, in the older of the new States, if I may use the expression, large districts of land hoarded up, yielding nothing to the revenues either of the General or the State Governments; they have remained in the midst of our settlements, breaking up our townships and county organizations, our school and road districts, and our neighborhoods; yielding nothing to the national wealth of the country, for the support of the race, or for any other beneficial purpose whatever. These things have become an eye-sore to the people of the new States; and they naturally ask, would it not be better that these lands should be given to men who will go upon, improve, and make them contribute *something* to the national wealth and to the comfort of the race and the benefit of society, than remain in this condition?

I know that representatives from the old, cannot appreciate the feeling that has grown up in the new States in reference to the disposal of these lands. But if gentlemen will examine the character, and trace the history of those who have peopled the Western States, I think they will appreciate it. Who are they who have settled there? Mostly people from the older States. They are—or, rather, were—the young men of the older States; the sons, perhaps, of men who had but small homesteads, which were barely sufficient to yield them support, and enable them to educate their children in economy, temperance, and industry. Their sons have grown up, and it is time they should start out and look after their own welfare and fortunes. They look about them in the old States, and find that it will be impossible to buy themselves homesteads there until after years of toil, and they will then have barely accumulated enough to buy land in which to lay their bones. They turn their attention to mechanical pursuits, and they see that every branch is full, leaving them therein no chance for success. They look to the learned professions; but every one knows that it is useless, nay, worse than useless, for a young man in the old States to attempt to succeed in either of them, unless he

has wealthy and influential friends to stand by and sustain him, or, at least, until he has worn into that success by the toil and deprivation of years. They naturally turn their eyes to our fertile, prosperous, and ever-hospitable West; but before they can accomplish their journey and locate themselves there, they must first have the means. They toil day by day, and month after month, and lay aside the little pittance they earn until each has saved enough to bear his expenses thitherward, and enable him to locate his quarter-section of land. When he has accomplished that task, and finds himself upon what is to be his home, as he gazes upon it, the thoughts which naturally pass through his mind are: "Well, here is my future dwelling-place. Here are my fortunes cast. This I have acquired after years of toil and labor. And, in the mean time, what good has this land yielded? Who has been benefited by it? It has been lying here in idleness. It has yielded nothing for the support of our race. It has contributed no revenues to State or nation. It has lain here, so much waste capital, which has done no one good. Could I have expended upon it the labor which I have expended to acquire it, I might ere this have made it a beautiful home. Here I might have reared my family." And is it surprising that he should consider the propriety of a Government of the people keeping in abeyance this amount of capital which might have been improved had he been permitted to have applied to it his labor, and thereby increased its value and made it productive? These are the feelings that have operated upon the population of the West, and induced this disposition to effect a change in the mode of disposing of these lands—and a change will be effected, you may depend upon it. But what shall be that change? This is the question. Shall it be the old proposition for graduating the prices of the public lands? That is a change which I myself should perhaps prefer. But we have seen it often attempted without success, and I have abandoned all hopes of its accomplishment.

But other and new propositions have been brought forward. One of them is to make liberal grants of these public lands to aid in the construction of railroads. This is a favorite measure at this time. Well, sir, I confess that I am in favor of disposing of these lands for the benefit of the new States within which they lie, in some form or other; and if no better proposition shall meet with success, I shall undoubtedly favor such grants to a reasonable extent. But I say unhesitatingly, that I prefer the proposition of this bill, to give these lands to actual settlers, who will cultivate and improve them. And why? Because it seems to me more reasonable and rational than the other.

The argument in favor of granting these lands for building railroads is, that it would result in the settlement and improvement of the country. In other words, if you build a road through a section of unimproved lands, that railroad will carry with it a population to improve and make them productive. That is very true; but it seems to me that we are commencing in the wrong way. I think it would be much more rational that we should first build up the population, and then, as a natural consequence, as they subdue the forest, improve the country, and produce a surplus, railroads, or other means of intercommunication, will follow. This will be the result, for two reasons: In the

first place, if you induce population to go upon these unimproved lands, and cultivate them, there will be a surplus of productions at one end of the road, while at the same time there is a necessity in the commercial and manufacturing communities at the other for that surplus, for their commercial and manufacturing purposes. At the same time you will find these commercial towns contain goods and merchandise in their markets which are needed in the remote settlements of such new country. So there is a double stimulus; for there is a surplus at each end which is desired at the other. You need have no fear of the want of energy or enterprise in this country. Where there is a want of communication, wherever there is need of an outlet for the surplus productions of the country, they will find their way. As well might you attempt, by your puny structures, to stop the onward course of you mountain torrent, as to block up the outlet for the surplus productions of any extensive region of country, when those productions need and must have a market. They will break through all barriers, and will not stop till they find their proper and legitimate channel. Let me give you an example: Take one of the Missouri railroads, which my friend from Missouri [Mr. HALL] is so earnestly advocating. In St. Louis there is a surplus of merchandise which needs a market. Now, you grant this land to actual settlers in the interior of that State, and you build up a population there which, while they will furnish a market for that merchandise, will, at the same time, produce a surplus of agricultural productions that will be needed in that city for her commercial purposes. So that you will have a powerful interest at both ends of your road conspiring to build it up.

Mr. HALL. If the gentleman will allow me to interrupt him, I will say that he misunderstands my position in relation to these railroads. I insist that the Missouri railroad will be made whether we get this grant of land or not. But I also insist that, by building this railroad, we confer a great and important benefit upon the Federal Government, which is a landed proprietor in our State; and I say that it is only right that the Government should pay something for the favor we thus confer.

Mr. DUNHAM. I do not wish to controvert the position taken by the gentleman from Missouri, [Mr. HALL.] I understand and appreciate it. I was only using the example to enforce a different argument, not at all conflicting with the gentleman's position.

Another argument in favor of this method of disposing of the public lands over that of granting them in aid of the construction of railroads is, that in this country, particularly where there is not a superabundance of capital, our citizens do not like to invest their money without a prospect of a *speedy* return; and where you extend a railroad into an unsettled region of country with the expectation that the work will carry with it a population, you must of necessity wait until that population can improve and cultivate the same, and produce a surplus for market, before the investment in the work can be made profitable to the capitalist, or advantageous to that community by whose wealth and enterprise it was constructed.

But, Mr. Chairman, let us hold out such in-

ducements as will stimulate settlers to go out and cultivate the prairies and subdue the forests on our Western frontiers, and we secure not only profitable freight for our roads, but quicken into activity a population who will be both willing and able to aid by their hands, as well as by their means, in their construction. In the one case, you build a railroad first, under the expectation that, *in time*, population will follow, and produce, a surplus for its profitable employment; while in the other, a surplus will await its completion, and at once afford it such freights as will make it yield an immediate income.

It seems to me, therefore, Mr. Chairman, that of all the propositions which have been made here for the disposition of the public lands, this is certainly the best. Grant the lands to actual settlers—encourage population—stimulate enterprise in your new States, and the surplus productions that will follow will create a necessity for railroads as an outlet to your markets, as well as ability to build them, and, at the same time, the same necessity will exist in your commercial towns to dispose of their commercial materials in exchange for that surplus, so that a double interest will be brought to bear that will carry through these works of improvement.

But there is another point of view in which, as a great question of political economy, I wish to present this subject. It is this: These lands are a portion of the capital of the country. When I speak of capital, I do not use the word in that limited and technical sense in which it is used in the books merely, but I use it rather in the sense of material; for there is no real capital in the country except its natural material. What is technically called capital—the money of the country—is but the medium through which the labor is applied to the real capital, the material; and there is no way of increasing the wealth of a country except by the application of the labor of it to that material. There can be no other way. There is no man, however ingenious, under the broad canopy of heaven, who can devise any other way for producing wealth but by bringing labor to act upon material. These public lands are a part of the material of the country. Here is, then, a part of the capital of the country lying in a state of unproductiveness, because uncultivated. Now, sir, go into your older and more thickly-populated States, and you will find a surplus of labor which, if not absolutely idle, is but partially employed, or, at least, not as profitably employed as it would be if it had the material to work upon. In the West is the material—these lands, lying unemployed and unproductive. If this labor, then, was employed upon this material, it would not only be itself more profitably employed, but that profit would be increased by the use or income of this material beneficially used and developed by it.

The difference is precisely this: One mechanic starts out in the world to make his fortune by his own unaided toil; another starts out with a capital or material of his own to work upon. The one receives the income derived from his labor alone, while the other receives the income derived from his labor and capital combined. I submit, then, to the committee, whether it would not be better that the unemployed, or the unprofitably employed, labor of the country should be applied to this unemployed material, and it developed, im-

proved, and made to yield, than that it should remain unproductive, and the labor but partially occupied, and partially remunerated? As a question of political economy, would it not be better that this capital of the country should be brought into a state of productiveness? Here are millions upon millions of capital lying idle, while you have the labor to make it productive, and which, if applied to it, would add to the wealth, the comfort, and the happiness of the people of the nation. But you say you will not allow this labor to be applied to this material unless the laborer will pay you for the privilege of thus adding to the wealth and welfare of your country. And this you call statesmanship; and this policy of mine, which would bring the toil of the country to add to its wealth and happiness, you call demagogism! Yours is statesmanship, though you are deriving no benefit from the immense amount of material. Mine is demagogism, because I desire to employ the means to improve that material—to develop it and make it productive to the country and to the world. Judge ye between the two! I repeat, this land is capital. Yet it is only when labor is applied to it, that it becomes productive—that it becomes valuable.

What, sir, (turning to Mr. RANTOUL, of Massachusetts,) makes those beautiful fabrics which are turned out from your cotton-mills so much more valuable than the raw material of which they were made? It is the labor of your operatives—the skill and ingenuity of your mechanics.

(Turning to Mr. DAWSON, of Pennsylvania.) Your iron lies idle in the bosom of your mountains—it is unproductive—it is valueless, and adds nothing to the national wealth of the country.

It is only when you bring the labor of the country to bear upon it, and remove it from the earth, and give it form and comeliness, that it assumes a value, that it adds to the national wealth. So it is with the soil of our fertile valleys. It is like the iron in your mountains, which, uncultivated, is valueless. It yields nothing. It is only when you bring the toil of the husbandman to bear upon it, to stir its turbid bosom, and open it up to the sun and the dews of heaven, that it begins to yield something for the support, the comfort, and the happiness of man, and to add to the wealth of the country, and of the world. But you will not allow your citizens to toil to add to your wealth, your power, and your greatness, unless they pay you tribute. You are like the miser, who, if he cannot get ten per cent. for his money, hoards it up, and gloats over it, day after day, and year after year, and it yields him nothing, when he could, perhaps, have profitably and safely invested it at a smaller per cent., to the benefit alike of himself and his fellow-men. It seems to me that there is little or no difference between the policy of hoarding money, and hoarding land. In the one case as in the other, you add nothing to either individual or national wealth; it pays no taxes, and yields no revenue to the State or nation. The capital, in both cases, lies idle, waste, and useless; it seems to me in violation of every maxim of good policy and sound sense.

But it is said that this measure of granting public lands is entirely selfish, and that the measure is exclusively for the benefit of the new States. But is this so? I undertake to say, sir, that so far as legislation removes restraint from the free

labor of the country, or from the free enjoyment of the natural material of the country, just so far you add not only to the wealth of the country, but you benefit all classes of citizens of every section. Now, I will illustrate it by the question of the tariff, which we have been discussing for so many years. When you reduce the tariff, you add to the common welfare of all classes of community equally. Why? Because you remove the unnatural restraint from the enjoyment of the labor and the materials of the country, and allow your citizens to seek the best market for the disposal of their surplus and for the supply of their wants. Apply the same principle to your public lands. Just so far as you remove the restraints, you add to the wealth and to the welfare of every portion of this nation. But place the poor and humble man who now, by unremitting toil, is able to make enough to support his family, and barely make the ends meet at the close of the year—place him upon one of these farms of the West, now lying idle, and he will be thenceforth adding to the capital of the country. He increases his wealth, sends his produce to market, and receives its return. That return is the comforts of life, which are manufactured in that region of country which is represented by the gentleman upon my right, [Mr. RANTOUL.] This increases the market for manufactured goods. The manufacturer is benefited by having the farmer in a position where he can furnish something for commerce and is able to buy and consume his manufactures.

But my Southern friends say, how does that benefit us of the South? *We do not manufacture.*

Mr. FULLER, of Maine, (interrupting.) My own little town consumes seventy thousand bushels of corn, twenty thousand bushels of wheat, and ten thousand barrels of pork. If all our population should remove to the West, where will the growers of the West find a market?

Mr. DUNHAM. If there was any objection on that score, it ought not to come from gentlemen from New England. It ought to come from Western men. And I tell that gentleman that we are not afraid of a competition in this respect. Even if you will send out all the surplus population of New England, and settle them upon our uncultivated land, and bring them into immediate competition with us, we fear not that competition. We feel, at least, that your people, when they are planted upon the virgin soil of the great West, cultivated under the nourishing dews of heaven, are supplying themselves and their families with plenty. That, at least, is something. Nor do I think, sir, that any portion of the gentleman's constituents will go to the West, unless they are convinced it will be for their interest. Surely, then, the gentleman, as a faithful Representative, ought not to oppose a measure so well calculated to secure the welfare and happiness of any portion of those whom he represents.

But I was alluding to another matter. Gentlemen of the South say, "How are we benefited? We can see how you of the West are benefited. It fills up the country, increases the products of that country for market, and enables your people to receive in return for them the manufactured goods of New England, New York, and other manufacturing States, and this is a benefit to those States; but how does *that* benefit us of the South?" The effect by the medium of commerce is felt throughout

every part of this Union, like the heart's blood, which is sent out by every pulsation to the remotest extremity of the physical system. Do you not have the benefits of our productions? And, in alluding to this, I allude to a dogma which has been thrust upon the country year after year, by one section—I mean New England. They have told us in the West, "You ought to give us a protective tariff." Why? Because the South derives all the benefits of a low tariff or free trade; that Europe furnishes a market for but little of our agricultural products except the tobacco and cotton of the South, in which we are not interested; that it is only the Southern planter and slaveholder that finds a market in Europe.

But is this true? Are the cotton and tobacco which go to Europe from this market only the products of the slave labor of the Southern planter? No, sir; they are more. They are our hogs, our cattle, our horses, our mules, our wheat and corn, which are changed into this shape, and thus find their way to an European market. We of the West find our market for these agricultural products upon the sugar and cotton farms of the South. The Southern planters use these as materials for carrying on their planting operations, and they change these materials into a different form, but which, in that new shape, are as much our agricultural productions as your cotton is your production, although changed by the industry and skill of the operative into the manufactured goods of New England; and it is in this new form that they find a market in New England and Europe. We of the West are, then, as much interested in this trade of cotton and tobacco, as the people of the South themselves; for, if we can furnish these materials, out of which you manufacture your cotton and tobacco, cheaper than you can raise them yourselves, you buy them of us, change their form upon your plantations, send them to market for us, and enable us to obtain, through the medium of commerce, in exchange, such manufactures and merchandise as we desire for our comfort and pleasure. In this manner every portion of the country is benefited. The manufacturer of New England is benefited, not only in finding a market for his goods in the West, but in finding an ample supply to feed the operatives in his manufacturing shops. Not only so, but if, by this increase of productions in the Northwest, we supply, more readily and cheaper, the support of the slave labor of the South, which furnishes the raw material for the employment of those operatives, will not that raw material be furnished cheaper, and in greater abundance? Will he not thus derive a benefit from this measure? I repeat, sir, that when you remove from any of Nature's great elements of wealth the restrictions which the artificial legislation of government has thrown around it, you increase the wealth, and add a stimulant to the energy of every portion of this broad Union, I care not whether it be North or South, East or West.

Well, there is another class that will reap the benefits of this measure. It is the commercial class. Your ships find their employ in transporting the agricultural products of the West, and by importing such articles as are received in exchange for them. It cannot, then, be otherwise than as you increase those products you increase that commerce, and in increasing it, you furnish these

abundant supplies to the starving nations of Europe, taking in return the productions of their labor, to minister to the comforts and pleasures of our own people. It is like the circling wave, which spreads broader and broader until it loses itself upon the most distant shore.

I need not speak more of what such a system would add to the national wealth of this country. I need not tell intelligent men that a quarter section of land in cultivation, with its buildings and improvements upon it, is worth much more to the nation than in its uncultivated state. I need not say that a man will save more of the proceeds of his labor when he is located upon that land, and can constantly lay out that labor, or its earnings, in its improvement, than if he were living with no fixed home and no fixed purpose. You, therefore, in thus bestowing land upon those who will occupy and improve it, add more to the individual and national wealth of the country, than by any other disposition of it.

But another objection to this bill, and it is one to which I have perhaps already incidentally alluded, is: that it takes the proceeds of the sales of these lands from the public revenues, and it is alleged that we shall thereby decrease these revenues; but I think not; for, if it be true, (and no one will controvert it,) that by giving these lands, as this bill proposes, to men of limited means, you augment the income of their labor, you increase their ability to purchase, and consequently their desire to consume those articles of commerce upon which a tariff is levied, and from which our revenues are derived, this will increase the importation of them, and, as a matter of course, the resulting revenue; and this increase, I doubt not, will equal, if not exceed, the revenue now derived from the sales of these lands. If it should not, the deficiency will be supplied by the tariff; and, as the articles upon which that is imposed are mostly consumed by our agricultural population, those who enjoy the benefits of the provisions of this bill, will also bear the increased burdens resulting therefrom—for, as the people of the West are mainly engaged in agricultural pursuits, and can reap little or no benefit from the tariff, and being the largest consumers of those articles taxed through our custom-houses, it is, as a necessary consequence, they who must make up, as consumers of imports, any deficiency in the revenue which may be occasioned by this bill.

But, sir, I had like to have forgotten the question of the gentleman from Maine, [Mr. FULLER.] He asks me if the individual who emigrates from the New England States and settles in the West, consumes anything more than he did before he removed from the East? I answer yes, because he better his condition, adds to his wealth, and hence to his ability to indulge in the gratification of his taste and comfort—and ability always begets desire to enjoy—and this increased gratification increases consumption. And if the consumers of New England shall emigrate to and settle upon these lands, others will take their places—the annual increase of her own citizens and the many coming every year from the various parts of Europe, which is sending us not its pauper population, as we are often told, but its thriving and industrious laborers.

Another of the objections urged to this bill is, that it grants land to foreigners; but I think it is

sufficiently restrictive in this respect, for its benefits are guardedly limited to those only who shall be in the country at the time of its passage; and even they are required to become naturalized, as a condition precedent to their availing themselves of the benefits of the measure.

But I must confess that if the proposition be true, that labor properly applied increases wealth, and is an advantage to the country, and that this land unemployed yields nothing to increase that wealth, I cannot see how it should be injurious to us, that the honest, industrious, and hard-working German should come here and settle upon a quarter section of this unemployed land, and make that which is now worthless, valuable and productive—that which is a wilderness, to blossom as the rose. I cannot see how the nation has lost anything by it. I cannot see how humanity has lost anything by it. I know something of the German and Irish who come to settle upon our soil. There is not a better, a more industrious, nor a more loyal population anywhere. They may come here with a little exuberance of republicanism, if you please, just as they have escaped from the shackles of tyranny, which have fettered their spirits and restrained their energies; but give them land to cultivate, and labor will soon sober down their judgments, and teach them the important lesson that that only is true liberty which is regulated by law.

But suppose gentlemen differ with me, and consider that this immigration of foreigners is an evil? Yet evil or no evil, its increased momentum every year is a fixed fact, and cannot be prevented. We cannot, if we would, adopt the Chinese policy of national isolation. No one, at this day, will think of preventing the oppressed victims of the tyranny of the Old World from seeking an asylum upon our shores. No one can be so selfish as to desire to prevent others from partaking of these blessings of liberty which have been showered upon us with so bountiful a hand, and, especially, when their enjoyment cannot diminish our own. So long, then, as your country maintains its superiority, so long as your institutions are worth enjoying—in short, so long as your liberties remain, this immigration will continue. It were better, then, to cease to inveigh against it, and endeavor to make it useful; to consider how we shall diminish its evils and augment its benefits. You can in no way so well accomplish this as by holding out such inducements as shall prevent these people from congregating in your towns and cities, as shall take them out upon your soil, where their labor can be profitably employed, and where, at the same time, they can obtain a permanent interest in that soil. There is something in the nature of man which makes him cling to that spot of earth he can call his own, and to the government that protects him in its enjoyment.

From whence came we? Your fathers and mine were of those very foreigners who heretofore came to this country, whose glory and prosperity you have so much at heart. Did they ruin it when they came? No, sir; our liberties, as you all know, and as our history will demonstrate, were won by emigrants, or the immediate descendants of emigrants. With no example before them, they established this Government and its institutions; and shall we, at this day, fear to trust a similar people, who have fled from the same op-

pressions of the Old World to enjoy the liberties of the New—when, too, they have these institutions and their glorious results before them, as also the example of the millions who have been born beneath them, and who understand and have enjoyed them? Let us not, sir, by a narrow policy, in effect say, that the countries from whence sprung the progenitors of the Washingtons, Jeffersons, Lafayettes, and De Kalbs, have exhausted “the breed of noble bloods;” and that henceforth nothing distinguished by talent, or exalted in patriotism, can spring from the countries of our own ancestors.

I cannot, Mr. Chairman, abide the narrow-minded, cold-hearted policy that wraps itself in the cloak of its own selfishness, and says, It is well with me, let others take care of themselves. Nor can I appreciate this vaunting philanthropy, which talks of going forth to right the wrongs of other lands, yet would refuse a home to the oppressed in our own; would refuse to allow them to occupy what we cannot use or enjoy; and, especially, when by doing so they add to our wealth and greatness, and help us to bear our burdens. I repeat, the wealth and prosperity of the Republic is produced by the application of the labor of such honest, industrious men to the material upon every side of us unemployed. If we take too much of your population from the old States, supply yourselves from those daily seeking homes upon our shores; and, in doing this, we shall be accomplishing the great mission for which we were sent—to relieve mankind, and restore to them liberty and happiness. I believe, Mr. Chairman, I am, perhaps, an enthusiast upon this subject, that we were placed here for wise and glorious purposes—to restore poor, downtrodden humanity to its long-lost dignity; to overthrow despots, and shed abroad the genial influence of freedom; to break the bonds of the oppressed, and bid the captive go free; to liberate, to elevate, and restore—not by going abroad, sword in hand, conquering and to conquer, as did Mahomet—but our destiny is to be accomplished by peaceful means, by the sword of the spirit, by the genius of our institutions. And this very bill will do more to extend the influence of those institutions and make them popular; more to break the chains of tyranny, and give an impetus to freedom, than anything else you possibly could do. What has given the people of Europe the ideas they possess, of our system of popular Government? Is it the mere right of your citizen to go to the ballot-box, and vote? Why, sir, the late example in France shows us that the most downtrodden wretch under the iron heel of tyranny, has been permitted to do the same. No! it is not that; it is something more. It is the spirit of our institutions; it is the fact that, wherever the American flag has been borne the people have been taught that here men enjoy the rights of men; that they stand up in the image of their God, responsible to none but Him for their action, not only morally and physically, but politically. It is this that has given *eclat* to the Government of our country; and, in no way can you add to that *eclat* more effectually than to let the world see that your citizens are in the enjoyment of the greatest blessings and benefits under it. I am sometimes reproached here, for my refusal to vote for appropriations for your magnificent public buildings, and your other public works; that I am penu-

rious in regard to appropriations of public money. I will acknowledge the charge to a certain extent, and I will give my motive for it. We are frequently pointed to the public buildings, and the public works of the nations of Europe as examples, and it is said that we must, like them, have magnificent public buildings; a magnificent army, and a magnificent navy. I tell you that we never can rival her in matters of this kind, nor do I desire that we should.

It is not these which strike the attention of the European traveler when he visits our shores and passes among our people; but it is your home-firesides scattered all over the land; the fact that wherever he finds a hearthstone, it is almost always the happy consolation of him who rests by it, that the little roof that shelters him and his family, protecting them from the storms of heaven, belongs to himself, and not to some mercenary landlord, and that it has been improved and beautified by his own honest industry. It is this that constitutes the *eclat*, the glory of our institutions, and of our country.

Our public works I would make convenient but plain, simple, and unostentatious. The Government I would administer on principles of the strictest economy. I can never forget that every dollar uselessly expended has been earned by the labor of the citizen, and takes so much for empty show of what would otherwise be employed to add to the pleasures and comforts of a home. I can never forget that we are but the servants and agents of the people, clothed with their power and dispensing their means, and that we should exercise that power and dispense those means only for their good. I can never forget that these magnificent public works are like the bright and brilliant blaze of some burning city that flashes upward to the skies, but which consumes and destroys. I much prefer to light the many cheerful blazes upon the home hearthstones, which, like the stars above us, speak of hope, of happiness, of heaven.

By this bill, which places within the reach of all the power of becoming owners of the soil, you demonstrate the beneficent spirit of our institutions, you add to their reputation, and give a new impulse to the cause of liberty throughout the world. It is doing much, not only for ourselves, but for mankind everywhere. My friend here [Mr. AVERETT] asks me where we got these public lands? I repeat, that they were paid for out of the public Treasury, but I have no hesitation in saying, that the Government will receive a far greater income by this disposition of them, as a consequence of the increase of tax-payers and of consumers of imported articles, upon which our tariff is levied, and from which our revenues are derived, than it could by the present mode of selling them at the minimum price of a dollar and a quarter an acre. And, besides, I have endeavored to show that the people of the older States, who have helped to buy these lands, would derive a benefit from the increased market which this bill will create for their surplus, equal if not greater than they now receive from the revenues derived from their sale. The gentleman says his State has nothing for us to consume. Sir, if Virginia, that boasts so much and so justly of her statesmen and her orators—Virginia, so proud of her early deeds of chivalry, has become only a consumer, producing nothing to add to the surplus of

the country, contributing nothing to the national wealth, then has she fallen low indeed. She may have no surplus manufactures, but has she no agricultural products, which will go to feed the increased number of manufacturing laborers that will be called into requisition elsewhere, to supply the increasing wants of those who shall occupy these lands, and make themselves able to purchase and consume?

Mr. AVERETT. I have only to say to the gentleman—

Mr. DUNHAM. I would yield with pleasure to the gentlemen, but that clock admonishes me that I have but a few minutes longer to speak. I beg the gentleman, therefore, will allow me to proceed uninterruptedly, in the few remaining moments left me. I have spoken of this measure merely as one of political economy. I want now to speak of it, as a great question of moral right. I am no "filibuster." I am no red republican. I do not desire to take a man's home from him, because he may have a little more land than he needs, or can properly cultivate; but this Government of ours is a peculiar one—a very peculiar one. It is a Government of the people. It has not one single dollar in its public Treasury; it has not one single dollar invested in its public works; it has not one single dollar invested in its public lands, but what has been paid from the earnings of the people, and which does not belong to the people. It can, then, give nothing to them. It may restore that which they have contributed, and which belongs to them, as it ought, when their interests will thereby be better subserved. I, then, submit this question to the committee and to the country: Is it right for such a Government to hoard up what belongs to the people, so that it cannot be used by them, especially when its use would be for the common benefit of all—to let these lands lie waste when your citizens need them for their support and sustenance? I do not believe it is. I do not believe that we are accomplishing the purposes for which this Government was ordained. I do not believe that we are faithful to the trust of our citizens in keeping in idleness these immense resources of wealth and happiness, doing no good to the people or to the country. I have often admired that lofty expression of the great Tecumseh—for he was great, though a savage; he was one of Nature's great men, made in God's own image, he spoke God's own language—the voice of nature—who, when General Harrison—I think it was General Harrison—was negotiating a treaty with him and the Indians under his command, ordered his interpreter to set the great chief a chair, and to tell him that his father desired him to take a seat. He drew himself up, only as can he who feels the dignity of a man, and replied: "My father! The Great Spirit is *my* father, the earth is *my* mother, and upon her bosom will I repose." And he stretched himself upon the bosom of our common mother. But you, in your wisdom—in your statesmanship—as intelligent American legislators, refuse to allow your fellow-men to repose upon that bosom, and to draw sustenance therefrom. This you call statesmanship, fulfilling the great trust which has been committed, under Providence, to your care by the American people. I would not take from one man to give to another. I believe the public land, the soil, should be under the control of the Government; but I submit to

you whether, as the representative, the agents of the people, we ought not so to control as to afford to them the greatest facilities for the enjoyment of it.

Those of our people who are starving from want of sustenance could draw it from the bosom of our common mother; but you will not permit them.

Sir, if this measure will add to the revenues of the Government, and to the wealth of the country; if it will add to the happiness of our citizens; if it will add to the prosperity of the people; if it will augment the power and glory of the nation, shall we not do more by adopting it to diffuse the spirit of liberty throughout the world than you will by going forth, sword in hand, to accomplish such a result? Our mission is one of peace. The principles of liberty must be disseminated in the still small voice of moral and peaceful influences; not proclaimed by the roar of cannon and the clangor of arms. War is anti-republican in its tendencies. The very organization, the very discipline, of an army or a navy is anti-republican. It concentrates power in the hands of those who administer the Government. It destroys the people, and con-

sumes their substance. If we would keep the fires of liberty burning brightly upon her altars, we must cultivate the arts of peace, we must add to the prosperity, the virtue, the intelligence, and the happiness of the people. You will thus give an influence to the cause of freedom that armies and navies cannot restrain. Tyrants may attempt to beat it back, but it will overleap their embattled walls, and break the serried hosts of their steel-clad soldiers, and find its way to the hearts of their oppressed people. It will kindle a love, a burning love, of liberty which cannot be restrained until oppression shall be swept away as with the besom of destruction. Freedom will be widely extended, and our own people will be prosperous and happy.

Mr. Chairman, in my efforts to condense within the limited time allotted to me, the remarks which I desired to make, I have run so hastily over them that I fear I have done neither justice to the subject or to myself; but as I have touched upon all the points to which I desired to allude, and as my hour has expired, I yield the floor.